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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image search method of searching for a desired image from a plurality of images stored in storage means, comprising:
- 5 the setting step of setting a weight value in correspondence with a property of feature amount used in similarity calculation of the image;
- the calculation step of calculating similarity between a designated search source image and each of,
- 10 the plurality of images on the basis of a feature amount of the designated search source image, a feature amount of each of the plurality of images, and the weight value set in the setting step; and
- the acquisition step of acquiring an image as a search result from the plurality of images on the basis of the image similarity calculated in the calculation step.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the calculation step comprises performing similarity calculation in units of properties using the feature amount of the search source image and the feature amount of each of the plurality of images and integrating obtained results with the weight to obtain the similarity.
- 25 3. The method according to claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the drawing step of
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allowing an operator to interactively draw an image,
and

the search source image is the image drawn in the
drawing step.

- 5 4. The method according to claim 2, wherein the
setting step comprises setting the weight in units of
regions obtained by segmenting the image into a
plurality of regions.
- 10 5. The method according to claim 4, wherein the
calculation step comprises segmenting each of two
images as processing targets into a plurality of
segmented regions, performing similarity calculation in
units of segmented regions using the feature amount,
and integrating results obtained in units of regions
15 with the weight set in the setting step to obtain the
similarity.
6. The method according to claim 1, wherein the
setting step comprises setting a high weight in a
region at a central portion of the image.
- 20 7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the
setting step comprises setting a high weight in a
region arbitrarily designated in the search source
image.
- 25 8. The method according to claim 1, further
comprising the display step of displaying an image
representing the image acquired in the acquisition step

as the search result.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the display step comprises displaying a thumbnail image of the image acquired in the acquisition step.
- 5 10. The method according to claim 8, wherein the display step comprises displaying an icon image corresponding to the image acquired in the acquisition step.
11. The method according to claim 8, wherein the 10 display step comprises, when one of displayed images is selected, displaying details of an image linked to the image.
12. The method according to claim 8, wherein the display step comprises displaying extracted images in 15 an order of similarities.
13. The method according to claim 2, wherein the setting step comprises setting the weight in units of attributes of a color space.
14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the 20 setting step comprises setting different weights for a feature amount representing luminance and a feature amount representing a color difference.
15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the calculation step comprises executing similarity 25 calculation using feature amounts corresponding to a YCbCr color space and integrating obtained results with

the weights to obtain the similarity.

16. An image search apparatus for searching for a desired image from a plurality of images stored in storage means, comprising:

5 setting means for setting a weight value in correspondence with a property of feature amount used in similarity calculation of the image;

calculation means for calculating similarity between a designated search source image and each of

10 the plurality of images on the basis of a feature amount of the designated search source image, a feature amount of each of the plurality of images, and the weight value set by said setting means; and

15 acquisition means for acquiring an image as a search result from the plurality of images on the basis of the image similarity calculated by said calculation means.

17. The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said calculation means performs similarity calculation in units of properties using the feature amount of the search source image and the feature amount of each of the plurality of images and integrates obtained results with the weight to obtain the similarity.

18. The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein
25 said apparatus further comprises drawing means for allowing an operator to interactively draw an image,

and

the search source image is the image drawn by
said drawing means.

19. The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said
5 setting means sets the weight in units of regions
obtained by segmenting the image into a plurality of
regions.

20. The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said
calculation means segments each of two images as
10 processing targets into a plurality of segmented
regions, performs similarity calculation in units of
segmented regions using the feature amount, and
integrates results obtained in units of regions with
the weight set by said setting means to obtain the
15 similarity.

21. The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said
setting means sets a high weight in a region at a
central portion of the image.

22. The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein said
20 setting means sets a high weight in a region
arbitrarily designated in the search source image.

23. The apparatus according to claim 16, further
comprising display means for displaying an image
representing the image acquired by said acquisition
25 means as the search result.

24. The apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said

display means displays a thumbnail image of the image acquired by said acquisition means.

25. The apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said display means displays an icon image corresponding to 5 the image acquired by said acquisition means.

26. The apparatus according to claim 23, wherein when one of displayed images is selected, said display means displays details of an image linked to the image.

27. The apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said 10 display means displays extracted images in an order of similarities.

28. The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said setting means sets the weight in units of attributes of a color space.

15 29. The apparatus according to claim 28, wherein said setting means sets different weights for a feature amount representing luminance and a feature amount representing a color difference.

30. The apparatus according to claim 29, wherein said 20 calculation means executes similarity calculation using feature amounts corresponding to a YCbCr color space and integrates obtained results with the weights to obtain the similarity.

31. A storage medium which stores a control program 25 for causing a computer to realize processing of searching for a desired image from a plurality of

images stored in storage means, said control program comprising:

- a code of the setting step of setting a weight value in correspondence with a property of feature
- 5 amount used in similarity calculation of the image;
- a code of the calculation step of calculating similarity between a designated search source image and each of the plurality of images on the basis of a feature amount of the designated search source image, a
- 10 feature amount of each of the plurality of images, and the weight value set in the setting step; and
- a code of the acquisition step of acquiring an image as a search result from the plurality of images on the basis of the image similarity calculated in the
- 15 calculation step.